

**Texas FFA Association**  
**Policy Handbook**  
**Section 34: Ethics Code**  
*Revised 9/12/22*

**34.1 Operational Premise**

*The FFA mission is developing students' potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education. Character development is a vital component of this mission, and the Texas FFA Association holds to the highest standards of conduct for its students, advisors and member schools. To this end, the Texas FFA Association shall hold students, advisors and member schools accountable for conduct which harms students, damages property, erodes the integrity of its events or damages its public image.*

**34.2 Classification of Student Violations**

- (a) Any student representative of a participant school, who by act or omission causes himself or herself, another contestant, or a participant school to do or fail to do any one or more of those actions or omissions listed below shall be in violation of the Texas FFA Association Ethics Code. Violations by student representatives of participant schools are classified in this section.
- (b) Category A violations requiring severe penalty or violations of rules that carry a specific penalty are but not limited to:
  - (1) violations of academic, membership or participation eligibility rules; or
  - (2) falsifying records, reports or applications or withholding information; or
  - (3) Improper interactions with contest officials or judges; or
  - (4) Defamation of another student's character in an officer election process; or
  - (5) Using the internet, email or another other media to defame a student, teacher or another other personnel while using the registered trademarks of the FFA organization; or
  - (6) Gaining or seeking to gain unfair advantage in any contest or officer election procedure or aiding another in gaining an unfair advantage; or
  - (7) Violation of campaign policies and procedures; or
  - (8) Violation of an officer or national delegate pledge; or
  - (9) Conference or camp rule violation that causes injury or property damage, or
  - (10) Hazing and/or harassing another student, or
  - (11) Failing to comply with applicable state laws regarding extracurricular activities, including UIL sanctions.
- (c) Category B violations are but not limited to:
  - (1) failing to comply with contest rules or contest official directives; or
  - (2) Taking prohibited materials into a competitive event; or
  - (3) Knowingly misquoting sources in a leadership or speaking development event; or
  - (4) Misleading contest officials concerning performance content (talent) or
  - (5) Misleading election officials concerning the content of an election speech or
  - (6) Failing to report known violations in a timely manner.
- (d) Category C violations are but not limited to:
  - (1) Blatant dress code violation at an FFA event at which a dress code is specified;
  - (2) Conference or camp rules violations which do not endanger personal or student safety or involve property damage.

**34.3 Classification of School District Personnel Violations**

- (a) Any covered school district personnel who by act or omission commits or causes a student representative or a participant school to do or fail to do any one or more of those actions or omissions listed below shall be in violation of the Texas FFA Association ethics code. Violations by school district personnel are classified below.
- (b) Category A violations requiring more severe penalty are:
  - (1) Manipulating or conspiring to manipulate a contest, award or scholarship selection Process
  - (2) Theft of services—failure to pay appropriate convention, conference or contest registration fees, **in a timely manner.**

- (3) Violating academic, membership or contest eligibility rules;
  - (4) Improper interaction with contest officials or judges,
  - (5) Falsifying records, reports or applications
  - (6) Manipulating livestock validation records or identification; **compliant to adhere to all livestock show policies and rules including but not limited to ethical treatment of animals**
  - (7) Plagiarizing or stealing intellectual property of another teacher or program by improperly obtaining printed or electronic files or by violating the prohibition of audio or video recording of events.
  - (8) Coaching students to gain an unfair advantage in a competitive event, as defined by the competitive event & awards policy.
  - (9) Practicing for an event at a state event site after the completion of the area event pursuant to career development rules
  - (10) Failing to report known violations in a timely manner or withholding information;
  - (11) Pressuring teachers to modify the grade or grades of participants in such a manner as to affect eligibility; or
  - (12) Failing to comply with applicable state laws regarding extracurricular activities
- (c) Category B violations are:
- (1) Knowingly violating the National Organization and/or the Texas FFA Association's trademark usage policies.
  - (2) Failure to report for contest judging commitments without cause and timely notice
  - (3) Refusal to submit student SAE records upon request to a school receiving a transferring student;
  - (4) Failure to submit accurate documentation in the roster submission process
  - (5) Gross negligence in supervision of students at an FFA function
  - (6) Failure to pay debts incurred for FFA products and services, **in a timely manner**

#### 34.4 Protests of Rule Violations

- (a) A participant school may protest an act or omission that is a violation of the Texas FFA Association Ethics Code, but may not protest the good faith decision of a contest judge, application evaluator or other official's decision. All protests shall be filed in writing with the executive committee at the appropriate level. Protests should be resolved within 15 working days. If the individual is not satisfied with the disposition of the protest, the plaintiff may appeal the case to the next level. Except in cases involving student eligibility, protests should be filed within ten working days of the alleged incident.
- (b) The executive board shall examine cases to ascertain whether there is cause to rehear the case, determining if the area executive committee's or state contest official's was arbitrary or capricious.

#### 34.5 Self Reporting Violations and State Executive Director Investigations

- (a) An agriculture, food and natural resources instructor, superintendent, principal or other school administrator may self-report an alleged violation of the Texas FFA Ethics Code or other policies by his or her program. **The initial report must be filed in writing with the appropriate committee supervising the event whether on the district, area, or state level within six months of the event. The committee in charge of the fact finding mission would forward the findings and decisions to the state office which would house the database for all violations and investigations.**
- (b) The executive director shall investigate each protest or allegation filed that is within the jurisdiction of the state executive board and report all findings to the appropriate committee, executive board or board of directors pursuant to germane policy or as deemed appropriate.
- (c) In response to a request by the state executive board, district or area executive committee, or executive director, a member school district and its schools shall submit its records that are germane to the protest filed or being investigated.

#### 34.6 Penalties and Sanctions

- (a) The state executive board's decision to impose a penalty shall be purposeful, reasonable, based upon facts documented and verified in an investigation or made evident at a hearing, and made after due

deliberation; and, therefore, shall not be valid if beyond its jurisdiction, if arbitrary, if not based upon the evidence, or if capricious.

- (b) Subject to the provisions of all subsections below, the following constitute the penalties that may be imposed by the state executive board following a determination of a violation of the Texas FFA Ethics Code.
- (c) The penalties that may be imposed by the state executive board on a student representative of a participant school for violation of the Texas FFA Ethics Code are public reprimand and individual suspension.
  - (1) Reprimand. A reprimand may be oral or in writing and shall not be published in the association's publications.
  - (2) Individual Suspension. If the state executive board finds that a student has failed to comply with the rules it may suspend the participant student from competition in all germane activities for one day to three years. Suspension may include a probationary period of up to three years, and may include any reasonable conditions, which, if not fulfilled, may result in additional suspension.
  - (3) Forfeiture of Individual Honors: If the state executive board has determined that a student has gained an unfair advantage whether intentionally or unintentionally by an omission or act or by the action or omission by school district personnel, the student may be directed to forfeit all honors or awards and references to these honors in future award and scholarship application processes.
- (d) The penalties that may be imposed by the state executive board on a participant school for violations of the Texas FFA Association's Ethics Code: reprimand; public reprimand; forfeiture of contest; disqualification from germane activity; and suspension.
  - (1) Reprimand. A reprimand may be oral or in writing and shall not be published in the association's publications. **A reprimand may include a probationary period of up to three years, and may include any reasonable conditions, which, if not fulfilled, may result in a more stringent penalty. Documentation of the reprimand and punishment will be maintained at the Texas FFA office, communicated on a need to know basis and may be accessed as necessary.**
  - (2) Forfeiture of Contest. The state executive board may order contests to be forfeited prior to or after the competition for violations of rules by covered school district personnel and/or participants if an unfair advantage was gained. The state executive board shall forfeit the contests(s) won by the individual or school, as a minimum penalty, if it finds that an individual contestant was not eligible to participate in the contest.
  - (3) Disqualification. The state executive board may order berths in above-district competitions to be forfeited prior to the competition for violations of rules by covered school district personnel and/or participants if an unfair advantage was gained.
  - (4) Suspension: The state executive board may suspend for a specified period or indefinitely the participation of a program or a teacher in an event or in a group or class of events and may include any reasonable conditions, which, if not fulfilled, may result in additional suspension.
  - (5) Suspension or Revocation of Charter: Under unusual special circumstances in which egregious violations have been habitually committed, the executive board may revoke or suspend a program charter and deny participation in any FFA activity or use of the FFA's registered trademarks.